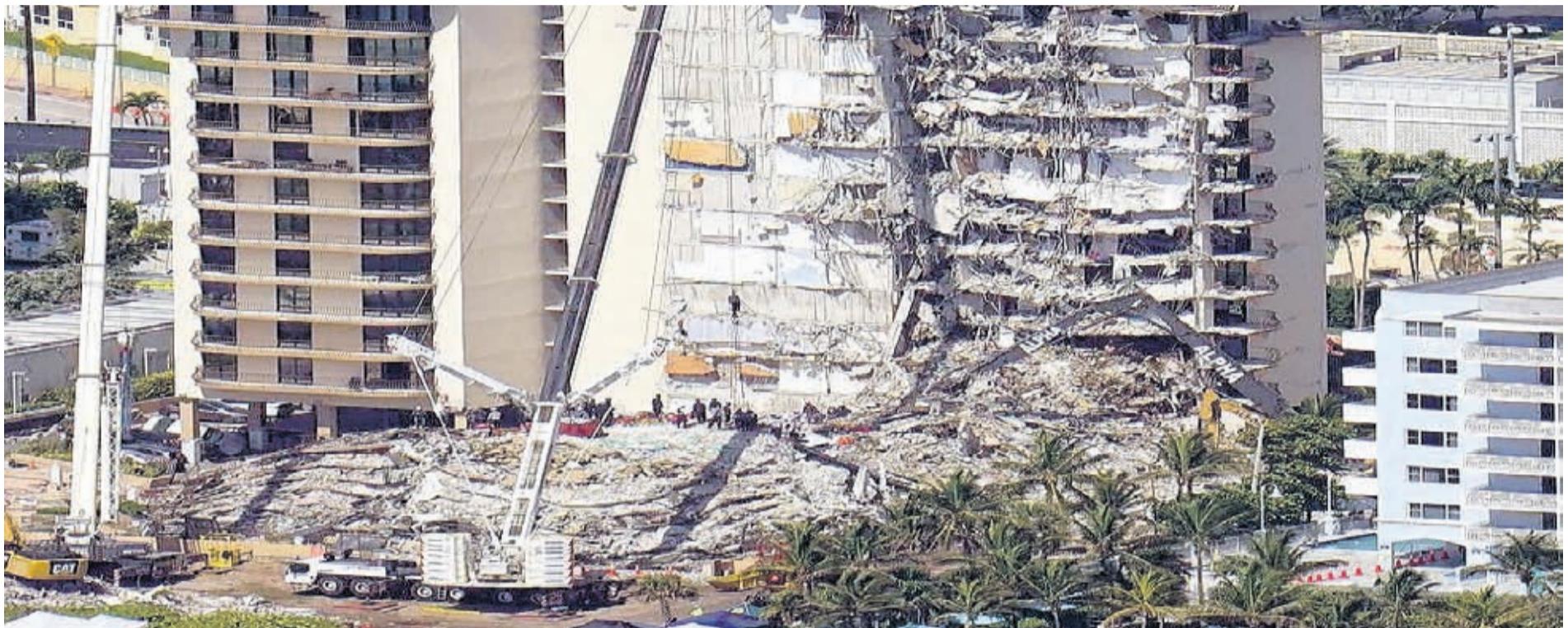




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Families frustrated at slow pace of condo rescue



Crews work in the rubble at the Champlain Towers South Condo, Sunday, June 27, 2021, in Surfside, Fla. One hundred fifty-nine people were still unaccounted for two days after Thursday's collapse.

(AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)
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Families frustrated at slow pace of condo rescue

From Front

By TERRY SPENCER and RUSS BYNUM

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — Rescuers digging through the rubble of a Florida beach-front condo sought to reassure families that they were doing as much as possible to find missing loved ones, but the crews said they needed to work carefully for the best chance of uncovering survivors.

As the death toll rose Sunday to nine, relatives were growing increasingly desperate for news and worried about the slow progress and dwindling hopes. No one has been pulled alive from the pile since hours after the collapse on Thursday morning. Some family members were tak-

en by bus Sunday to a location near the site after relatives frustrated with the pace of rescue efforts demanded to visit the scene. "My daughter is 26 years old, in perfect health. She could make it out of there," one mother told rescuers during a weekend meeting with family members. A video of the meeting was posted by Instagram user Abigail Pereira.

"It's not enough," continued the mother, who was among relatives who pushed authorities to bring in experts from other countries to help. "Imagine if your children were in there." More than 150 people remain unaccounted for in Surfside, and authorities and loved ones fear the toll will go much higher.

Scores of rescue workers remained on the massive pile of rubble, searching for survivors but so far only finding bodies and human remains. In a meeting with families on Saturday evening, people moaned and wept as Miami Dade Assistant Fire Chief Raide Jadallah explained why he could not answer their repeated questions about how many victims they had found.

"It's not necessarily that we're finding victims, OK? We're finding human remains," Jadallah said, according to the video posted on Instagram.

Every time crews find remains, they clean the area and remove the remains. They work with a rabbi to ensure any religious rituals are done properly, Jadall-



South Florida Urban Search and Rescue team look for survivors at the 12-story oceanfront condo, Champlain Towers South on Saturday, June 26, 2021 that partially collapsed early Thursday morning in the Surfside area of Miami.

(Al Diaz/Miami Herald via AP)

lah said. "So the question is, is why is things taking so long?" he said, "What we're doing is making sure that everything is followed to a 'T.'"

Authorities said their efforts are still a search-and-rescue operation. Alan Cominsky, chief of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department, said they are holding out hope of finding someone alive, but they must be slow and methodical.

"The debris field is scattered throughout, and it's compact, extremely compact," he said.

Debris must be stabilized and shored up as they go. "If there is a void space, we want to make sure we're given every possibility of a survivor. That's why we can't just go in and move things erratically, because that's going to have the worst outcome possible," he said.

So far, he said, they have not come across any voids. In meetings with authorities, family members repeatedly pushed rescuers to do more. One asked why they could not surgically remove the largest pieces of cement with cranes, to try to uncover bigger voids where survivors might be found.

"There's not giant pieces that we can easily surgically remove," replied Maggie Castro, of the fire rescue agency, who described herself as "one of the people out there attempting to find your family members."

"They're not big pieces. Pieces are crumbled, and they're being held together by the rebar that's part of the construction. So if we try to lift that piece, even as carefully, those pieces that are crumbling can fall off the sides and disturb the pile," Castro said.

She said they try to cut rebar in strategic places and remove large pieces, but that they have to remove them in a way that nothing will fall onto the pile.

"We are doing layer by layer," Castro said. "It doesn't stop. It's all day. All night."

A fire in the rubble pile slowed efforts earlier in the weekend, but Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said it was suppressed Saturday.

She said six to eight teams are actively searching the pile at any given time, with hundreds of team members on standby ready to rotate in. She said teams have worked around the clock since Thursday, and there was no lack of personnel. □



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End to COVID-19 hotel housing for homeless raises worries

By KELLI KENNEDY and

LISA RATHKE

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP)

— Everyone on the streets knows "Sir Charles," the skinny guy with the saxophone, sunglasses, felt hat and megawatt smile. At a gig this week at the iconic Elbo Room beach bar, he danced with a soda in his hand as the bouncers teased him, the ladies applauded and patrons slipped a few dollars into his tip jar.

But after the magic of a street musician's nightlife wore off, the 63-year-old returned to a seedy Fort Lauderdale motel, laid his head on a pillow and wondered how many nights he had left with a roof over his head.

Charles Adams has spent the last three months living at a motel paid for with federal money aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 by taking homeless residents off the streets. But as hotels reopen to tourists and funding wanes, tens of thousands of homeless nationwide are being forced from the motels.

Several cities like New Orleans ended their programs months ago amid financing shortages. Experts warn there aren't enough shelter beds, which means sending many back on the streets. In one Vermont community, social workers are offering camping equipment to some homeless people no longer eligible to stay at motels come month's end. Cities drew from various federal pots to fund the homeless hotels. The Federal Emergency Management Agency extended its funding through September, but the approval process is so arduous that many jurisdictions are not taking advantage of it.

The crunch comes as millions across the country face uncertainty over the end of a federal freeze on most evictions on July 31. The ban kept many people from being turned onto the streets during the pandemic, yet it also artificially kept many units off the market meaning less long-term housing for those already



David Moran poses in his hotel room, paid for by a pandemic voucher program, at the Hilltop Inn in Berlin, Vt., Wednesday, June 16, 2021. Tens of thousands of homeless like Moran, who now has a job at Applebee's, have been staying in hotels across the U.S. paid for by federal programs aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19. "I'm not going to be able to get a shower on a regular basis, which around food is not a good thing," he said. "So I think there should be more available funds for people that are really trying."

(AP Photo/Charles Krupa)

homeless.

City officials and advocacy groups are working to secure housing for the homeless leaving hotels, but it's challenging. Big cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco, which put up at least 10,000 and 2,000 people respectively, face staffing shortages to help with logistics like securing the required ID documents and background checks, said Samantha Batko, senior researcher at the Urban Institute.

Additional federal resources are coming, including tens of billions of dollars from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, but it takes time to set up new programs. Experts warn there will be a lag.

"Those programs are in the process of being rolled out now, and all of those resources are not in hand in communities," Batko said.

At the Fort Lauderdale motel, Adams gets free lunches and dinners, clean linens and doesn't have to hunt for a place to shower before a gig. A caseworker at the motel, which the city requested not be named because it's now open for tourists, works on scheduling mental health appointments and other social ser-



Ivy LeGrand pauses in the doorway of her hotel room while talking about the future at her temporary home at the Hilltop Inn in Berlin, Vt., Wednesday, June 16, 2021. LeGrand and her boyfriend camped outdoors before the motel program. Now, the 35-year-old says they may have no choice but to return to their tent.

(AP Photo/Charles Krupa)

vices.

Fort Lauderdale housed roughly 130 people in motels last summer until it shuttered the program amid funding shortages. Tents quickly sprang up, and the city restarted the program in April, spending \$1.2 million overall.

Adams is one of roughly 50 homeless people still at the Fort Lauderdale motel. He was on the street for a year before that.

"I didn't get a lot of sleep. I lost a lot of weight," he said.

The motel program was supposed to end a few weeks ago, "but we don't want to put people back on the street," said city

spokeswoman Ashley Doussard. "We're having a really difficult time finding places for them to go."

Families were prioritized first. That left single men like Adams. His caseworker told him he may have to go to a shelter in a couple weeks. Gazing at his polished saxophone in its case, Adams shook his head.

"I don't like it, the filthiness, thieves, drug dealers, drug addicts," he said of shelters. "I can't be around people like that."

The shades were still on, as always, but in a rare moment the cool cat admitted he's worried: "I don't have any other place to go."

It's a stressful picture unfolding in cities nationwide for many homeless Americans who found themselves with a stable address, often for the first time in years, during COVID-19.

New York City is moving roughly 9,000 homeless people out of hotels and back into traditional shelters now that hotels are filling with tourists.

Placing the homeless in hotels is far more expensive than congregant housing and was always a stopgap. Some states used federal pandemic money to buy hotels to use as shelters or convert into more permanent housing. California and Oregon have already acquired some and King County, Washington, is doing the same.

New Orleans housed 618 homeless people in hotels during the pandemic in a program financed by the city and state, but it ended in November amid struggles with reimbursement funding.

About 75% were placed in permanent housing, some went to emergency shelters and 87 returned to the street, joining a growing number of homeless caused by the pandemic, said Martha Kegel, executive director of the nonprofit UNITY of Greater New Orleans. The latest count from January showed nearly 500 people living on the streets of The Big Easy.

In Berlin, Vermont, David Moran will have to leave his temporary home Wednesday at the Hilltop Inn. It's been a convenient spot next to his job at an Applebee's restaurant, and he wishes the voucher program would be extended.

"I'm not going to be able to get a shower on a regular basis, which around food is not a good thing," he said. "I think there should be more available funds for people that are really trying."

Ivy LeGrand and her boyfriend camped outdoors before getting a room at the motel. Now the 35-year-old says they may have no choice but to again live in a tent. □

States hesitant to adopt digital COVID vaccine verification



Security personnel ask customers for proof of vaccination as they enter City Winery, Thursday, June 24, 2021, in New York. Customers wanting to wine, dine and unwind to live music at the City Winery's flagship restaurant in New York must show proof of a COVID-19 vaccination to get in. But that's not required at most other dining establishments in the city. And it's not necessary at other City Winery sites around the U.S.

By DAVID A. LIEB

(AP) - Customers wanting to wine, dine and unwind to live music at the City Winery's flagship restaurant in New York must show proof of a COVID-19 vaccination to get in. But that's not required at most other dining establishments in the city. And it's not necessary at other City Winery sites around the U.S.

If City Winery tried doing such a thing at its places in Atlanta and Nashville, "we would have no business, because so many people are basically against it," said CEO Michael Dorf.

Across the U.S., many hard-hit businesses eager to return to normal have been reluctant to demand proof of vaccination from customers. And the public and the politicians in many places have made it clear they don't care for the idea.

In fact, far more states have banned proof-of-vaccination policies than have created smartphone-based programs for people to digitally display their vaccination status.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still recommends masks when dining or gathering indoors for those who aren't fully vaccinated. But few states require it, and most busi-

nesses rely on voluntary compliance — even in places with low vaccination rates where COVID-19 cases are climbing. Digital vaccine verification programs could make it easier to enforce safeguards and tamp down new outbreaks.

"But that only works when you have mass adoption, and mass adoption requires trust and actual buy-in with what the state health department is doing, which is not necessarily present in all states," said Alan Butler, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a Washington-based non-profit organization.

Hawaii is the only state enforcing some version of a vaccine passport. It requires travelers to upload a photo or PDF of their Hawaii vaccination document or pass a pre-arrival COVID-19 test to avoid having to quarantine for 10 days. Earlier this month, California became just the third state — behind New York and Louisiana — to offer residents a way to voluntarily display digital proof of their COVID-19 shots. None of those states requires the use of their digital verification systems to access either public or private-sector places.

By contrast, at least 18 states led by Republican governors or legislatures prohibit the creation of so-called vaccine passports or ban public entities from requiring proof of vaccination. Several of those — including Alabama, Florida, Iowa, Montana, North Dakota and Texas — also bar most businesses from denying service to those who aren't vaccinated.

"Texas is open 100%, and we want to make sure that you have the freedom to go where you want without limits," Gov. Greg Abbott said in signing a law against vaccine passports. The prohibition doesn't apply to the demands employers make on their employees. Earlier this month, a federal judge in Texas threw out a lawsuit from 117 Houston hospital employees who challenged a workplace requirement that they get vaccinated. More than 150 were later fired or resigned for not getting their shots.

In Louisiana, under a Republican-passed bill facing a potential veto from Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards, public facilities would not be allowed to bar unvaccinated people until the COVID-19 vaccines have received full approval from the Food

and Drug Administration. The vaccines for now are being dispensed under emergency FDA authorization. In May, Louisiana launched a program allowing residents using the state's digital driver's license, LA Wallet, to add a record of their COVID-19 vaccination. But its reach is still limited. About 105,000 people have activated the COVID-19 verification function. That's about 14% of those with a digital license and less than 4% of Louisiana's 3.1 million people with valid driver's licenses. □

5 dead after hot air balloon crashes in Albuquerque street

By FELICIA FONSECA

(AP) - A hot air balloon hit a power line and crashed onto a busy street in Albuquerque on Saturday, killing all five people on board, including the parents of an Albuquerque police officer, police said. The crash happened around 7 a.m. in the city's west side, police spokesman Gilbert Gallegos said. Police identified two of the passengers as Martin Martinez, 59, and Mary Martinez, 62 — the parents of a prison transport officer with the Albuquerque Police Department.

Police did not immediately release the others' names but said the male pilot, and a female and male passenger were from central New Mexico. Martin Martinez also had worked for Albuquerque police on bicycle patrol but most recently was a sergeant with the local school district's police force, authorities said. Some Albuquerque officers who responded to the crash had worked with him and were sent home because it took a toll on them, said police Chief Harold Medina.

The Albuquerque Public Schools District said Martin Martinez "will forever be remembered for his lifelong dedication, courage and selflessness to the profession of law enforcement."

The intersection where the balloon crashed was still cordoned off late Saturday afternoon. The multi-colored balloon had skirted the top of the power lines, sending at least one dangling and temporarily knocking out power to more than 13,000 homes, said police spokesman Gilbert Gallegos.

The gondola fell about 100 feet (30 meters) and crashed in the street's median, catching on fire, the Federal Aviation Administration said. Bystanders frantically called out for a fire extinguisher to put out the flames and prayed aloud, video posted online showed.

The envelope of the balloon floated away, eventually landing on a residential rooftop, Gallegos said. The FAA did not immediately have registration details for the balloon but identified it as a Cameron 0-120. Gallegos said hot air balloons can be difficult to manage, particularly when the wind kicks up. Albuquerque is a mecca for hot air ballooning. The city hosts a nine-day event in October that draws hundreds of thousands of spectators and pilots from around the world. It is one of the most photographed events globally. Albuquerque-area residents are treated to colorful displays of balloons floating over homes and along the Rio Grande throughout the year. While accidents aren't common, they happen. □

Blinken, Lapid meet in Rome amid reset US-Israel relations

By LAURIE KELLMAN, MATTHEW LEE and ELLEN KNICKMEYER

ROME (AP) — Hush-hush diplomacy. In-person visits. Hush-hush diplomacy. In-person visits. And a very public no-surprises agreement on Iran.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid met in Rome on Sunday as their new governments look to turn the page on former President Donald Trump and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose close alliance aggravated partisan divisions within both countries.

Now, with Trump sidelined in Florida and Netanyahu leading the opposition, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett are focused on pragmatic diplomacy rather than dramatic initiatives that risk fomenting opposition at home or distracting from other priorities.

"In the past few years, mistakes were made," Lapid told Blinken as they sat down for talks in a Rome hotel. "Israel's bipartisan standing was hurt. We will fix those mistakes together." Lapid said he had spoken with Democrats and Republicans since taking office and had "reminded them all that we share America's most basic, basic values — freedom, democracy, free markets and constant search for peace." Blinken noted that even though the two governments are new, "the foundation that we're working on is one of an enduring partnership, a relationship, friendship between the United States and Israel."

The push means aiming for smaller achievements, such as shoring up the informal cease-fire that ended last month's war with Gaza's militant Hamas rulers and replenishing Israel's Iron Dome defense system. A major push to revive the long-dormant peace process between Israel and the Palestinians could unsettle the delicate balance.

"Nobody thinks it's a good idea to start charging



Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, and Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid pose for a family picture during their meeting in Rome, Sunday, June 27, 2021. Blinken is on a week long trip in Europe traveling to Germany, France and Italy.

(AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, Pool)



Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid in Rome, Sunday, June 27, 2021. Blinken is on a week long trip in Europe traveling to Germany, France and Italy.

(AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, Pool)

through on a major new peace initiative," said Ilan Goldenberg, a Mideast security expert at the non-profit Center for a New American Security. "But there are things you can do quietly under the radar, on the ground, to improve the situation."

That approach — of managing the conflict rather than trying to solve it — may succeed in papering over domestic divisions. But it also maintains a status quo that the Palestinians find increasingly oppressive and hopeless, and which has fueled countless cycles of unrest.

The Americans and Israelis will try to work out differences away from the public, as in Biden's "quiet" diplomacy, when he privately urged Netanyahu to wind down the Israel-Hamas war ahead of a truce that took effect May 21.

"We believe the way to discuss those disagreements is through direct and profes-

sional conversation, not a press conference," Lapid said. Both governments will try to preserve Israel's fragile governing coalition, in part by reducing provocations that played a part in sparking the 11-day war that claimed at least 254 Palestinian lives and killed 13 people in Israel.

The new coalition in Israel shares little beyond the conviction that Netanyahu had to go. It's composed of eight parties, each effectively with veto power on decisions. So if even one party bolts, Israel's government would be at serious risk of collapse, with Netanyahu waiting just offstage. At least in the short term, Lapid, a centrist, will be Israel's point man on repairs to the tattered relationship with Biden and the Democrats. The party controls both houses of Congress but is increasingly divided on the Mideast conflict, with progressive members calling for the U.S. to exert

more pressure on Israel.

"What they're building now is mutual trust," said Michael Oren, former Israeli ambassador to the United States under Netanyahu. "I expect a change of tone rather than of substance... but there's a possibility that it could produce something better for Israel."

Topping the agenda in both countries are talks in Vienna over reviving Iran's 2015 accord with world powers to limit Tehran's ability to develop nuclear weapons. Trump, with Netanyahu's backing, pulled the U.S. out of the deal in 2018 and imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic. Biden promised to restore and expand the agreement.

Now, Israel's new government seems intent on staying engaged and trying to influence the talks, rather than scuttle them.

"Israel has some serious reservations about the Iran nuclear deal that is being put together in Vienna," Lapid said, before pledging that Israel would make its objections privately. Netanyahu had loudly and publicly opposed the deal when the Obama administration was negotiating it.

"We have the same objective," Blinken said. "Sometimes we differ on the tactics, and we, I think, are very clear and direct to each other when that's the case and that's exactly how it's supposed to be."

Even the right-leaning Bennett, who is ideologically aligned with the hawkish Netanyahu, has toned down the rhetoric on Iran.

"We will continue to consult with our friends, persuade, discuss, and share information and insights out of mutual respect," Bennett said Thursday. "But at the end of the day, we will be responsible for our own fate, nobody else."

Tamping down tensions — or at least not inflaming them — is a key strategy, the officials said.

Blinken spoke of the need to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but did not offer any kind of timetable or any strategy to "offer a

more hopeful future for everyone: Palestinians and Israelis alike with equal measures of opportunity and dignity."

And, while the Biden administration supports and hopes to expand on the Trump-era Abraham Accords that normalized relations between Israel and several Arab countries, Blinken said they "are not a substitute for engaging on the issues between Israelis and Palestinians that need to be resolved."

On the U.S. side, the Biden administration has made clear it wants to extricate the country from intractable conflicts in the Middle East and focus on other challenges, such as climate change and competition with China.

On Monday, outgoing Israeli President Reuven Rivlin is to visit Washington at Biden's invitation. A group of House Democrats are planning an official trip to Israel as soon as Congress' July 4th recess.

There's even talk of Lapid and Bennett traveling to Washington later in the summer, separately or together, the officials said. Bennett will serve as prime minister for the first two years, followed by Lapid, the architect of the coalition.

All the officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss administration plans and logistics, which have not been finalized.

So far, the reset seems to be functioning. But with the Israeli coalition barely two weeks old, significant challenges loom.

Biden has moved to reverse Netanyahu-backed Trump policies that alienated the Palestinians, and the administration has said Israelis and Palestinians should enjoy equal measures of security and prosperity.

But the U.S. has yet to explain how it intends to bring that about without ending Israel's half-century military occupation of the West Bank, its blockade on Hamas-ruled Gaza and discriminatory policies in Jerusalem that fueled a spring of unrest. □

Riots in Lebanon over economy injure 10 soldiers, protesters

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanese troops deployed in the northern city of Tripoli early Sunday taking positions around major state institutions after a night of protests and riots against worsening living conditions left several protesters and 10 soldiers injured.

Sporadic protests were reported throughout Lebanon on Saturday as the country's 20-month economic crisis worsened. The World Bank described the crisis as one of the worst the world has witnessed in 150 years. It is coupled with a political deadlock that has left Lebanon without a government since August.

The largest protests were in the southern port city of Sidon and in Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest city and most impoverished. Sporadic protests and road closures took place in the capital Beirut.

Lebanon has been suffering severe shortages of vital products including fuel, medicine and medical products, angering the



Protesters burn tires to block a road, in Beirut, Lebanon, Thursday, June 24, 2021. Dozens of angry protesters, angered by deteriorating living conditions and government inaction, partially blocked Beirut's main highway to the capital's only airport, turning trash bin over and setting tires on fire.

(AP Photo/Bilal Hussein)

public.

Lebanon's currency hit a record low Saturday, reaching 18,000 pounds to the U.S. dollar. The pound has lost more than 90% of its value since the crisis began.

In October 2019 protesters called for the removal of the political class that has run the country since the end of the 1975-90 civil war and has been blamed for

corruption and mismanagement that has ruined the country's economy. The army said rioters on motorcycles threw stun grenades at troops in Tripoli injuring nine soldiers, while

another was injured when hit by a stone. Protesters attacked several state institutions in the city.

State-run National News Agency said Tripoli and other cities in Lebanon were quiet around noon Sunday.

The situation in Lebanon is not expected to improve as political bickering between President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri has delayed the formation of a government since Hariri was named to the post in October. Talks with the International Monetary Fund over the economic crisis have been suspended since last year.

The World Bank said Lebanon's gross domestic product is projected to contract 9.5% in 2021, after shrinking by 20.3% in 2020 and 6.7% the year before.

Tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs since late 2019 in the tiny country of 6 million, including a million Syrian refugees. More than half the population lives in poverty. □

Indian police say bomb-laden drones hit air base in Kashmir

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Indian officials said Sunday they suspect explosives-laden drones were used to attack an air base in the disputed region of Kashmir, calling it the first such incident of its kind in India.

Dilbagh Singh, the region's police director-general, told the private news channel New Delhi Television that "drones with payload were used in both the blasts." Singh called the attack an act of terrorism.

Two soldiers were lightly wounded in the explosions, according to a military officer who spoke on condition of anonymity in keeping with military regulations. India's air force tweeted that the attack caused minor damage to a building on the base, located in the southern city of Jammu in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir, while the second blast hit an open area. It said no military equipment was damaged.

The incident, if proven to have been carried out by anti-India rebels, would mark a major shift in strategy against New Delhi. Rebels have primarily used classic guerrilla tactics such as ambushes, hit-and-run attacks, remote-controlled explosions and car bombings.

Lt. Gen. D.S. Hooda, who was head of the Indian military's Northern Command from 2014 to 2016 which covers Kashmir, said Sunday's potential drone strike poses a "huge and serious challenge" for the security apparatus. He said commercial drones are easily available on the market and don't need advanced technology to be used in attacks.

"Drones have a small visual signature and traditional radars hardly pick them up," Hooda said. "It will require a whole range of new modifications for the military to intercept and defuse these kinds of attacks."

Muslim-majority Kashmir is divided between India and Pakistan, and the Himalayan region is claimed by both in its entirety. Rebels have been fighting against Indian rule since 1989. Most Muslim Kashmiris support the rebel goal that the territory be united either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country.

Both countries claim to have shot down spy drones in the parts of Kashmir under their respective control. The air base in Jammu is also used as a civilian airport, and the Press Trust of India news agency quoted the airport's director, Pravat Ranjan Beuria, as saying there was no disruption to civilian flights.

Indian authorities said forensic investigators were surveying the area, and were later joined by the country's premier anti-terrorism agency, the National Investigating Agency.

Last week, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi



A police officer stands outside the Jammu air force station after two suspected blasts were reported early morning in Jammu, India, Sunday, June 27, 2021. Indian officials said Sunday they suspected explosives-laden drones were used to attack the air base in the disputed region of Kashmir, calling it the first such incident of its kind in India.

(AP Photo/Channi Anand)

held a crucial meeting with pro-India politicians from Kashmir for the first time since New Delhi stripped the region's semi-autonomy and imposed a slew of administrative changes, which many likened to the beginning of settler colonialism.

Indian authorities in recent years have raised the pos-



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UK health minister resigns after breaching coronavirus rules

By FRANK GRIFFITHS and JILL LAWLESS

LONDON (AP) — U.K. Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who has led the country's response to the coronavirus, resigned Saturday, a day after apologizing for breaching social distancing rules with an aide with whom he was allegedly having an affair.

Hancock had been under growing pressure since the tabloid Sun newspaper published images showing him and senior aide Gina Coladangelo kissing in an office at the Department of Health. The Sun said the closed circuit television images were taken May 6 — 11 days before lockdown rules were eased to allow hugs and other physical contact with people outside one's own household. In a resignation letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Hancock said the government owed it "to people who have sacrificed so much in this pandemic to be honest when we have let them down."

"And those of us who make these rules have got to stick by them and that's why I've got to resign," he wrote.

Sajid Javid, who was the U.K. Treasury chief earlier in Johnson's government before resigning in February 2020, will replace Hancock as health secretary. Javid was also home secretary in then Prime Minister Theresa May's government.

Johnson said he was sorry to receive Hancock's resignation and that he "should leave office very proud of what you have achieved — not just in tackling the pandemic, but even before COVID-19 struck us."

Johnson had earlier expressed confidence in Hancock despite widespread calls to fire him.

Jonathan Ashworth, health

spokesman for the opposition Labour Party, said "it is right that Matt Hancock has resigned. But why didn't Boris Johnson have the guts to sack him and why did he say the matter was closed?"

Some lawmakers from the governing Conservatives had also called on Hancock to quit because he wasn't practicing what he has been preaching during the pandemic.

"I want to reiterate my apology for breaking the guidance, and apologize to my family and loved ones for putting them through this," he said. "I also need (to) be with my children at this time." Hancock, 42, is the latest in a string of British officials to be accused of breaching restrictions they imposed on the rest of the population to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The government is also facing questions about the circumstances in which Hancock hired Coladangelo, a university friend who was appointed to his department last year. She was initially employed as an unpaid adviser and this year became a non-executive director at the Department of Health, a role that pays about 15,000 pounds (\$21,000) a year.

Johnson's Conservative government has been branded a "chumocracy" by critics for hiring special advisers and contractors from outside the civil service without long-customary levels of scrutiny.

Hancock's department has been accused of waiving procurement rules to award lucrative contracts for protective equipment and other medical essentials, often to personal contacts. Hancock has said he was driven by the need to secure essential supplies

quickly at the height of the outbreak.

Hancock has faced weeks of pressure since the prime minister's former top aide, Dominic Cummings, accused him of botching the government's response to the pandemic. Cummings, now a bitter critic of the government he once served, told lawmakers last month that Hancock "should have been fired" for alleged lies and errors. He also published a WhatsApp message in which Johnson branded Hancock "totally (expletive) hopeless."

Cummings himself was accused of breaking the rules and undermining the government's "stay home" message when he drove 250 miles (400 kilo-



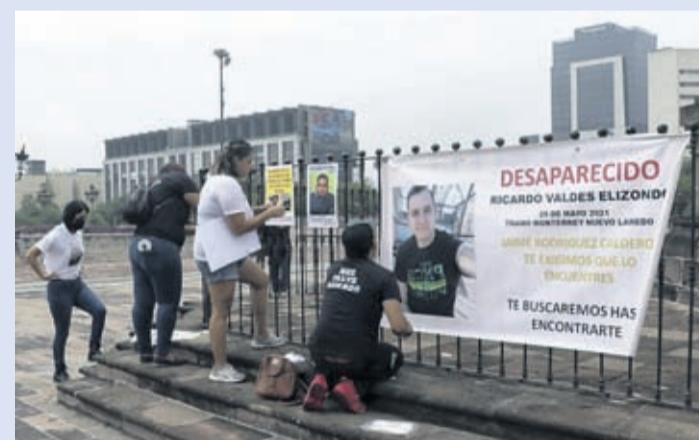
In this file photo dated Thursday, May 27, 2021, Britain's Health Secretary Matt Hancock speaks during a coronavirus media briefing from Downing Street in London. Britain's health minister has resigned as Health Secretary in a letter to Boris Johnson, released Saturday June 26, 2021.

(AP Photo/Matt Dunham, FILE)

meters) across England to his parents' home during the spring 2020 lockdown. Johnson resisted pressure to

fire him, but Cummings left his job in November amid a power struggle in the prime minister's office. □

Disappearances rise on Mexico's 'highway of death' to border



Family of Ricardo Valdes, who disappeared on the road on May 25, put up posters with their photography during a protest in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon state, Mexico, Thursday, June 24, 2021. As many as 50 people in Mexico are missing after they set off on simple highway trips between the industrial hub of Monterrey and the border city of Nuevo Laredo; relatives say they simply disappeared on the heavily traveled road, which has been dubbed 'the highway of death,' never to be seen again.

(AP Photo/Roberto Martinez)

By MARK STEVENSON

MEXICO CITY (AP) — As many as 50 people are missing after setting out on three-hour car trips this year between Mexico's

death."

Relatives say family members simply vanished. The disappearances, and last week's shooting of 15 apparently innocent bystanders in Reynosa, suggest Mexico is returning to the dark days of the 2006-2012 drug war when cartel gunmen often targeted the general public as well as one another.

"It's no longer between the cartels; they are attacking the public," said activist Angelica Orozco. As many as half a dozen of those who disappeared on the highway are believed to be U.S. citizens or residents, though the U.S. Embassy could not confirm their status. One, José de Jesús Gómez from Irving, Texas, reportedly disappeared on the highway on June 3. □

LOCAL



MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Center Visit our newest Location on Palm Beach!

PALM BEACH — MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Center just opened a third walk-in location on Palm Beach at Budget Car Rental next to Soprano's Piano Bar. The other two locations are at the Cove Mall and near the Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort at the Mill.

All three fit2fly test centers offer your best option for the post vacation COVID-19 test which has been a requirement since January 26th 2021 by the U.S. before returning home. All passengers going to the United States, including U.S. citizens, are required to have a negative (antigen or PCR) COVID-19 test result of a test taken maximum three days prior to boarding the flight, or documentation of recovery from COVID-19. MedCare's testing centers in and close to the hotels provide you with an easy and secure solution.

MedCare Clinic, a high-quality medical clinic that is specialized in urgent care for tourists and that has been appointed as the national COVID-19 clinic for tourists, and Laboratorio di Servicio, a full-service modern medical laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment, have partnered up to provide fast and reliable COVID-19 testing to all. Laboratorio di Servicio is ISO-15189:2012 accredited by the Dutch Council for Accreditation (M317).

Rapid PCR

As Aruba resumes to receive more and more visitors each month, one thing has become very clear: testing is critical. Thus far MedCare Clinic has been offering high-volume laboratory testing with results in 24 hours or less. The newest service on the market is Rapid PCR, where you receive your results in minutes not hours.

Just steps away from you

The Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Centers are located at the Cove Mall, near the Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort at the Mill, and now also at Budget car rental next to Soprano's Piano Bar. These three locations at a stone's throw from your resort, condominium, or other vacation accommodation. Walk-ins are welcome. It is recommended that the tests are done timely, as the negative test is only accepted if taken up to three days before boarding your flight. MedCare Fit2Fly Testing Center at the Cove Mall is opposite the Holiday Inn and is open every day for walk-ins from 8 AM through 10 PM. MedCare's other location is situated at The Courtyard Aruba Resort, is across the street from the RIU Hotel and is open every day from 8:30 AM until 2 PM. The Newest location at Budget Car Rental next to Soprano's Piano Bar is open daily from 5 PM to 9 PM.



At your hotel

For a selection of hotels/resorts in Aruba, MedCare has setup Testing Centers on site. The hotels/resorts at which we have a testing site are: Divi All Inclusive, Divi Dutch Village, Divi Golf, Divi Phoenix, Divi Tamarijn, Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort, Hyatt Regency, Renaissance, and the Ritz-Carlton Resort. Please contact your front desk for more information on our Testing Centers at these properties.

Costs and timing

Passengers must be tested with a viral test that could be either an Antigen Test or a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT), such as the reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (PCR). The price for the Antigen Test is only \$50, and the PCR Test is available, for \$125. The new rapid PCR will be \$150 (results in 30 minutes.) MedCare offers the easier and substantially cheaper Antigen Test that is acceptable for travel to the U.S. as per the CDC guidelines. Pre-travel testing is not covered by the Aruban visitor insurance. Please contact your insurance company to verify if testing costs are insured. Results are e-mailed to you within 24 hours of testing.

Private bookings

For your convenience, Medcare also offers private testing at your accommodation/hotel room for a one-time service fee of \$120. This fee covers testing up to 10 people (one appointment, at one location and a specific time). Additional persons will be charged \$10 per person. □

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The Governor of Aruba starts consultations

ORANJESTAD - The Governor of Aruba, His Excellency Alfonso Boekhoudt, will start on Monday morning, June 28, 2021 with consultations with advisory bodies and political leaders. During the consultations, the Governor advice on the options for forming a new cabinet, in view of the election results for the States.

Governor Boekhoudt first speaks separately with the chairman of the Advisory Board, Mr Frits Goedgedrag, and the President of the States, Mr Juan Thijssen. After that, the Governor will speak with the from Monday afternoon list leaders of the political parties that have at least one seat on the basis of the provisional election results achieved. This concerns Mrs Evelyn Wever-Croes (MEP), Mr Mike Eman (AVP), Mr Ursell Arends (RAIZ), Ms Marisol Lopez Tromp (MAS) and Mr Miguel Mansur (Accion21).

Subsequently, the Governor will hold consultations with the chairman of the Social and Economic Council, Ms Tisa LaSorte, the Acting President of the Court of Audit, Mr Frederick Nuboer, and with the Aruban member of the

At least ten reef-associated shark species in the Dutch Caribbean

WAGENINGEN, THE NETHERLANDS — Wageningen Marine Research reported ten reef-associated shark species in the Dutch Caribbean in a recent published study as part of Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA)'s Save Our Sharks Project. The most common species are the nurse shark and the Caribbean reef shark. Overall, more sharks were observed in conservation areas than in unprotected areas, highlighting the importance of these zones in shark conservation.

More than 100 million sharks are killed each year as a result of fishing and shark finning activities, twice the rate at which they can reproduce. The demand for fins and other shark products has driven a number of species close to extinction. Sharks are especially vulnerable to overfishing and habitat degradation as they are late to mature and produce few young. The main threats to sharks in our waters are accidental bycatch, habitat degradation and the risk of a shark fin market developing, which would lead to targeted fishing of sharks.

We need healthy oceans and healthy oceans need sharks

Sharks keep our oceans healthy. These top predators remove sick or weak members of their prey populations. A decrease in number of sharks leads to a disturbed natural balance in the sea. This can affect the overall fish population, and good fish stocks are not only important for fishermen that depend on fishing but also for (dive) tourism and the local community.

Continued on Page 10



Aruba Financial Supervision Board, Mrs. Hellen van der Wal.

The consultations are the start of the formation pro-

cess to arrive at a new government for Aruba. The consultations are expected to be concluded on Wednesday 30 June. The next step in the The forma-

tion process is that the Governor, on the basis of the outcome of the consultations, appoints an informateur and formulates the assignment to this person. □

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At least ten reef-associated shark species in the Dutch Caribbean

Continued from Page 9

Respect, not fear, sharks

Sharks are some of the most misunderstood species. For generations sharks had an undeserved bad reputation. People tend to see them as terrifying animals that pose a danger to everything that swims in the ocean, including humans. But we now know that is very far from the truth; these magnificent creatures are essential to healthy oceans and risks to humans are small.

DCNA's Save Our Sharks Project

There is a lack of knowledge concerning the distribution and abundance of shark and ray species throughout the Dutch Caribbean. To combat this knowledge gap, from 2015-2018, DCNA ran the "Save our Sharks" (SOS) project for the Dutch Caribbean, funded by the Dutch Postcode Lottery. In this project DCNA collaborated with local fisherman and scientists and aimed to build popular support for shark and ray conservation amongst the local community, as well as increasing knowledge about shark and ray species within the region by conducting a number of research projects.

Shark Research

A recently published study by Wageningen Marine Research as part of DCNA's SOS Project established a baseline for current shark diversity, distribution, abundance, spatial behaviour and popula-



Nurse shark on the Saba Bank Hans Leijnse

tion structure for inshore reefs around the Dutch Caribbean islands.

There were two methods used by the researchers to study sharks. One method used Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) which used a device consisting of two cameras set in front of a baited feed bag. The idea is that as sharks come near the bait bag to feed, video footage can be collected to identify and count local shark populations. The other method was acoustic telemetry to track sharks. In this method, a small acoustic tracking device is implanted within the shark. Acoustic receivers are installed at specific locations, and whenever sharks with these transmitters travel near the receiver (within a range of 450 to 850 metres) they are recorded.

The first studies using BRUV were conducted on Saba, Saba Bank and St. Eustatius to

better understand the local population of sharks and rays and their relative abundances, and were funded by the Dutch Government. Starting in 2015, as part of the SOS project, additional studies were conducted to include the waters around Bonaire, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. In 2017 a BRUV survey was done at Aruba, financed by Global Finprint.

In addition, as part of the SOS project, acoustic telemetry was also used to better understand the movements of sharks, habitat use, migration and connectivity between islands. The telemetry study tracked two shark species, Caribbean reef shark (*Carcharhinus perezi*) and nurse shark (*Ginglymostoma cirratum*) around Saba (from 2014) and then around Saba Bank, Sint Maarten and Sint Eustatius (from 2015).

Findings

In BRUVs deployed around Sint Maarten, Curaçao and Bonaire the most common detected shark species were Caribbean reef shark, with Sint Maarten also frequently showing nurse sharks. Overall, more sharks were observed in marine parks or areas of conservation than in unprotected areas, highlighting the importance of these zones in shark conservation. Furthermore, when comparing the BRUV surveys from Sint Maarten, Curaçao and Bonaire to previous BRUV studies from Aruba, Saba, Sint Eustatius and Saba Bank, it showed that the Aruba survey had the largest shark diversity (8 species) and the Bonaire survey the lowest (2 species). The Saba survey documented 5 shark species, Saba bank had 4 shark species with Curaçao, Sint Eustatius and Sint Maarten each registering 3 shark species. There was an additional BRUV submarine test at 300 metres deep off Curaçao which found an additional shark species (Cuban dogfish). In total, at least 10 shark species were seen within the Dutch Caribbean in the different BRUV surveys.

The acoustic telemetry studies demonstrated that both the Caribbean reef shark and nurse shark have small home ranges and strong site fidelity. Large crossings between areas were rare, and found for two Caribbean reef sharks and one nurse shark which travelled between Saba and Saba bank. The two Caribbean reef sharks made short directed journeys back and forth, whereas the nurse shark after two years absence showed up at the Saba Bank before returning to Saba. One nurse shark from another study on the US Virgin Islands was detected in the network on the Saba Bank, a distance of at least 160 kilometres.

Importance of Protected Areas

Both the BRUV and acoustic telemetry studies showed higher presence of reef associated sharks within the conservation zones, along with high site fidelity and small home ranges. Furthermore, as some longer distance movements were also documented, interconnectivity between these areas is just beginning to be understood. The ongoing study on acoustic telemetry (funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV)) will yield more data on this. Therefore, not only are local marine parks crucial for the conservation efforts of sharks and rays, but larger conservation networks, such as the Yarari Marine Mammal and Shark Sanctuary which compromises all the waters of Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius, are vital to protect entire populations.

More information

Winter, H.V., de Graaf, M. (2019). Diversity, abundance, distribution and habitat use reef-associated sharks in the Dutch Caribbean. Wageningen University & Research report C105/18.□

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Pandemic pets are a 'furry annuity,' says Petco CEO



In this image taken from video Petco CEO Ron Coughlin speaks during an interview with The Associated Press on June 3, 2021.

Associated Press

By JOSEPH PISANI

AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Yummy, a 12-year-old Labrador retriever, is in Petco's San Diego offices so much he has his own title.

"We call him the chief dog officer," says CEO Ron Coughlin, the real top dog at Petco, who brings Yummy to work every day. "He sits right next to me in my office."

It's a good time to oversee a company that sells leashes and squeaky toys. Americans spent a record \$103.6 billion on their pets last year, up 7% from 2019, as more people sought the comfort of a furry friend during the pandemic, according to the American Pet Products Association.

Nearly 13 million households got a pet last year, the trade association said. Coughlin calls those pandemic pets a "furry annuity," since he expects pet parents to come into Petco's 1,500 stores for years to come to groom their dogs, visit a vet or buy a new collar. And like Yummy, he

also hopes some of those new pets will make their way to offices as their owners head back, too. The company is offering free tips to employers, like how to keep office-bound pets healthy ("always provide fresh water") and keep the workplace smelling nice ("bring pet beds home to wash").

In a recent interview with The Associated Press, Coughlin also talked about when he thinks the current pet food shortage will end and why the pandemic made people pick bigger dog breeds. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: Some pet food is hard to find right now. What is going on?

A: There was no crystal ball that said they were going to be millions of new pets in the United States in 2020. So, the food manufacturers didn't have the supply. There is a backlog from vendors. It varies by brand, it varies by type, even by form. There's more tightness in cans, believe it or not,

than there are kibble-type products. But if you look at the results that we posted last quarter, we're able to switch people into products that are equal quality, but that are available.

Q: During the pandemic people got used to shopping online. Will they still come to Petco stores?

A: I have to admit, I was worried about that. But that is not what we're seeing. Our brick and mortar is very strong. They're coming in to get advice, but they're also coming for grooming. They're coming to get training. They're coming to see our vets in our hospitals and clinics. This whole idea of a one-stop shop is resonating both digitally, but also in brick and mortar.

Q: How has Petco benefited from the pandemic?

A: We call it the furry annuity. There's a lot of people who talk about these COVID beneficiaries. Yeah, you get an exercise bike and you get one. You remodel the garage? You don't have another garage to remodel. With us, there's

millions of pets that are basically a furry annuity for the next decade. And that's unique to our industry. And they're going to give us a tailwind for years to come.

Q: I've heard you say before that people are getting larger dog breeds. Why is that?

A: There's a macro trend in the United States on the back end of COVID-19 of migration away from cities toward suburbs or rural areas, places that have larger size homes. And there tends to be a correlation between the size of the living space and the type of pet that is adopted, which makes sense. If you have a yard, you're more likely to get a larger, more active dog. The good news for us is that larger dogs have more food in their bowls and the supplies cost more.

Q: What's the benefit of bringing your pet to work?

A: It just makes for a better environment and you don't have to leave your loved one at home. There's statistics that show that people are more likely to stay with

companies or much more likely to switch to a company if they have a pet-friendly workplace. It just makes people happier and gives us something to talk about and share experiences.

Q: Don't pets at offices have accidents?

A: It happens far less than you would expect. I've been bringing Yummy here for three years and we've had two situations, both of which were my fault because I didn't take him out and I didn't read the tea leaves. But there was one funny story where we had a new vendor in, and we were pitching them on expanding distribution to Petco. It was my turn to present and I brought Yummy in the room with me and he went to the head of that company and peed for about a minute right in front of him. I got down on my knees and I cleaned it up. And the next day they said that they're going to expand distribution and the deal closer was me on my knees, cleaning up the pee from Yummy. □

CROSSWORD

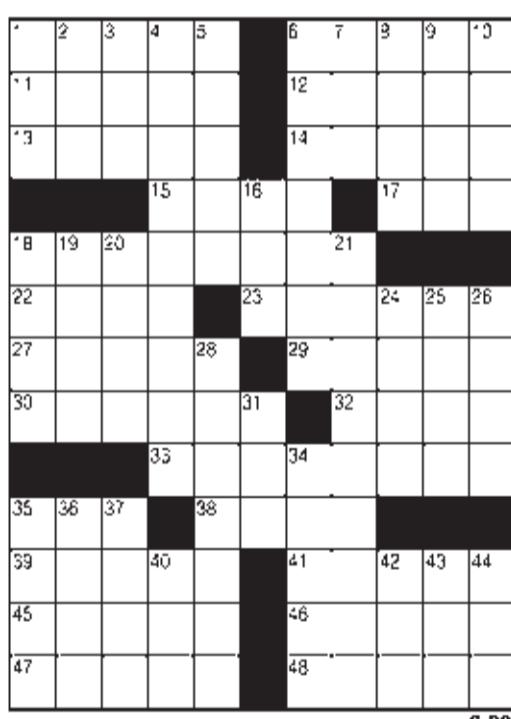
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

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speech
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superior
46 Smallest
mammal
47 Schemes
48 Play
setting



Saturday's answer



A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

6-28

CRYPTOQUOTE

Q S I I S U I V D S V H H D F S D E N I R K

E Z T A Z L I D H N O S V U Z T D

E Z T I K S H B — H Z J S E Z T I K S H B .

— H V A E R V R V

Saturday's Cryptoquote: PROBLEMS ARE NOT STOP SIGNS, THEY ARE GUIDELINES. — ROBERT H. SCHULLER

Scientists hail golden age to trace bird migration with tech



The antenna of an Argos satellite tag extends past the tail feathers of a female American robin as she feeds a worm to her hungry nestlings on a front porch in Cheverly, Md., Sunday, May 9, 2021.

Associated Press

By CHRISTINA LARSON
AP Science Writer

TAKOMA PARK, Md. (AP) —

A plump robin wearing a tiny metal backpack with an antenna hops around a suburban yard in Takoma Park, then plucks a cicada from the ground for a snack.

Ecologist Emily Williams watches through binoculars from behind a bush. On this clear spring day, she's snooping on his dating life. "Now I'm watching to see whether he's found a mate," she said, scrutinizing his interactions with another robin in a nearby tree. Once the bird moves on at season's end, she'll rely on the backpack to beam frequent location data to the Argos satellite, then back to Williams' laptop, to track it.

The goal is to unravel why some American robins migrate long distances, but others do not. With more precise information about nesting success and conditions in breeding and wintering grounds, "we should be able to tell the relative roles of genetics versus the environment in shaping why birds migrate," said Williams, who is based at Georgetown University.

Putting beacons on birds is not novel.

But a new antenna on the International Space Station and receptors on the Argos satellite, plus the shrinking size of tracking chips and batteries, are allowing scientists to remotely moni-

rector of the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior, whose scientific team is honing the technology. After "the usual troubleshooting for space science," the antenna was turned back on this spring.

As researchers deploy precision tags, Wikelski envisions the development of "an 'Internet of animals' — a collection of sensors around the world giving us a better picture of the movement of life on the planet."

The American robin is an iconic songbird in North America, its bright chirp a harbinger of spring. Yet its migratory habits remain a bit mysterious to scientists.

"It's astounding how little we know about some of the most common songbirds," said Ken Rosenberg, a conservation scientist at Cornell University. "We have a general idea of migration, a range map, but that's really just a broad impression."

An earlier study Williams worked on showed some robins are long-distance migrants — flying more than 2,780 miles (4,480 km) between their breeding area in Alaska and winter grounds in Texas — while others hop around a single backyard most of the year. What factors drive some robins to migrate, while others don't? Does it have to do with available food, temperature fluctuations or success in mating and rearing chicks?

Williams hopes more detailed data from satellite tags, combined with records of nesting success, will provide insights, and she's working with partners who are tagging robins in Alaska, Indiana and Florida for a three-year study.

Scientists have previously put GPS-tracking devices on larger raptors, but the technology has only recently become small and light enough for some songbirds.

Tracking devices must be less than 5% of the animal's weight to avoid encumbering them. □

Dutch group launches data harvesting claim against TikTok



This Feb. 25, 2020, file photo, shows the icon for TikTok in New York.

By MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands

(AP) — A Dutch consumer group is launching a 1.5 billion euro (\$1.8 billion) claim against TikTok over what it alleges is unlawful harvesting of personal data from users of the popular video sharing platform.

The Consumentenbond and a foundation called Take Back Your Privacy demanded Thursday that TikTok pay damages to 1.2 million to 1.6 million Dutch children who use the app. "The conduct of TikTok is pure exploitation," Consumentenbond director Sandra Molenaar said in a statement. "The company earns hundreds of millions per year on the backs of children. And that while privacy law prescribes that children should receive additional protection."

TikTok is hugely popular with teenagers and young adults, who use it to post

and watch short-form videos.

The consumer organization and privacy foundation are demanding that TikTok pay damages to Dutch children and delete what they call unlawfully collected personal data. They say if TikTok does not comply, they will take the company to court.

TikTok responded in an emailed statement saying the company is "committed to engage with external experts and organizations to make sure we're doing what we can to keep people on TikTok safe."

It added that "privacy and

safety are top priorities for TikTok and we have robust policies, processes and technologies in place to help protect all users, and our teenage users in particular."

In February, TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance, agreed to pay \$92 million in a settlement to U.S. users who are part of a class-action lawsuit alleging that the video-sharing app failed to get their consent to collect data in violation of a strict Illinois privacy law.

The social media app also is facing complaints in the European Union.

Associated Press

Late last month, the EU's executive, the European Commission, gave TikTok one month to answer complaints from a European consumer group over its commercial practices. The Commission said some contractual terms in TikTok's policies could be considered misleading and confusing for consumers, adding that concerns relating to issues including hidden marketing and advertising strategies targeting children were raised. □



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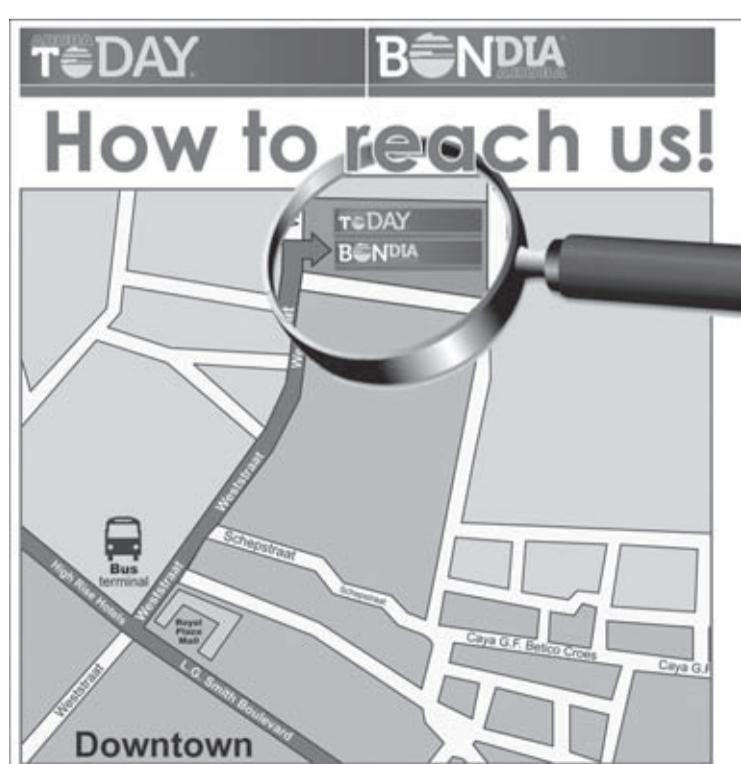
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'In the Heights' lifts hopes for a Latino film breakthrough

By SIGAL RATNER-ARIAS

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Color. Dance. Music. Joy. An all Latino cast!

The hype for "In the Heights" has brought great expectation for Latinos in the United States, a group that's been historically underrepresented and widely typecast in films. And with upcoming titles like "Cinderella" with Cuban-American singer Camila Cabello, "The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard" with Mexican star Salma Hayek and Steven Spielberg's revival of "West Side Story," this seems to be just the beginning of a string of productions that place Latinos front and center.

"In the Heights," which opens Friday, is an adaptation of the Tony-award winning musical by Lin-Manuel Miranda and Quiara Alegría Hudes about the hopes and struggles of residents of New York City's Washington Heights. Directed by Jon M. Chu ("Crazy Rich Asians"), many hope it will mark a new beginning on the big screen for the largest minority group in the country — one that mirrors shifts that have already happened for Black and Asian actors and creators.

"You know, every decade there's, 'Is this movie gonna break through? Or is this particular music style gonna break through? Or this particular performer or singer? Are they gonna open the doors for a kind of explosion?'" says Jimmy Smits, who is of Puerto Rican descent. "I think the dynamics right now in terms of where we are culturally, just in terms of our population, and the potential economic power that we have, ... the universe aligned in a nice way."

"You have this beautiful collage of people in the community," says Smits, the star of "NYPD Blue" and "West Wing" who plays Kevin Rosario, a single father and the owner a taxi cab service, in "In the Heights." "It's the immigrant experience that's been part of the fabric of this country since it started. And it's pos-



This combination of photos shows actors, from left, John Leguizamo, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Rita Moreno and Anthony Ramos.

Associated Press

itive. So we need that right now after the pandemic."

John Leguizamo agrees. "I think that 'In the Heights' is gonna be THE project that changes the whole thing finally," says the Colombian-American actor and playwright, who started his career on film and television but, like Miranda, found a place to tell his stories — and validation of this work — on and off Broadway.

Leguizamo, who won a special Tony Award in 2018 for his commitment to bringing diverse stories and audiences to Broadway through his one-man shows including "Freak," "Ghetto Klown" and "Latin History for Morons," says he's been pitching stories to Hollywood for 30-plus years.

"I started to believe that maybe I don't know how to write, maybe I just don't know how to pitch, cause all my stories were rejected," he says.

"And then I started to realize, 'Oh my God, it's because it was Latin content!' They didn't know what to do with it."

"They weren't rejecting my ability, there were rejecting my culture."

He found success on the stage "because there aren't any gatekeepers in theater," he says. "I just needed to write something dope, get somebody to produce it and the audience was so hungry for it. They were dying to see themselves!"

About 60.6 million Hispanics live in the United States, the Census Bureau estimates. And many are devoted filmgoers: Latinos have consistently led the box of-

fice, reaching 29% of tickets sold, according to the latest Motion Picture Association report on theatergoers. Yet they only represent 4.5% of all speaking or named characters and a mere 3% of lead or co-lead actors, a 2019 study of 1,200 popular movies from 2007 to 2018 by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative found.

Awards recognition, too, has been elusive. This year's Oscars featured a diverse slate of nominees, but no Latino performers.

"I think our absence at the Oscars was appalling," Leguizamo says. "(But) the Oscars is the symptom; the disease is Hollywood. We need more Latin executives making decisions."

In 1951, Puerto Rican José Ferrer became the first Latino actor to receive an Academy Award for his leading role in "Cyrano de Bergerac."

The same decade, Mexican-born Anthony Quinn got two for best supporting actor, for "Viva Zapata!" (1953) and "Lust for Life" (1957). Puerto Rican Rita Moreno became the first Latina to get the best supporting actress award in 1962 as Anita in "West Side Story."

Since then, only one more Latino has been recognized in the supporting actor category: Puerto Rican Benicio del Toro for 2000's "Traffic." Spaniards Javier Bardem and Penélope Cruz got supporting roles awards in 2008 and 2009, for "No Country for Old Men" and "Vicky Cristina Barcelona," respectively. Kenyan actor Lupita Nyong'o, who was born in Mexico, won the same prize in 2014 for "12

Years a Slave."

No Latina has won best actress at the Oscars, and few have even been considered. Hayek was nominated for the English-language movie "Frida," but other contenders competed for performances in foreign language films: Fernanda Montenegro for Brazil's "Central Station," Catalina Sandino Moreno for Colombia's "Maria Full of Grace" and Yalitza Aparicio for Mexico's "Roma."

Rita Moreno, an Emmy,

Grammy, Oscar and Tony

winner whose career spans

seven decades, says she

has seen huge progress for

women and other minorities

in Hollywood.

"What still concerns me mightily and profoundly is that Hispanics haven't gotten their hold on our profession," she says in an interview ahead of the release of the documentary

"Rita Moreno: Just a Girl

Who Decided to Go for

It."

"I don't know what the hell is wrong. I don't know what is not working right. The Black community has done incredibly, and I have nothing but the deepest admiration for the Black professional community. They've done it. And I think we can take some lessons from them. But where is our 'Moonlight'? Why are we not advancing?"

Moreno noted that Hispanic identity is often rooted in specific countries.

"It's very complicated. People forget that we're not just Hispanic," she says. "Maybe the answer, or the beginning of the answer, lies in some kind of summit." At 89, and despite all the titles coming this year, she

doesn't expect to see this happen in her lifetime: "My age forbids it. But I sure as hell hope something happens. I can't believe we're still struggling the way we are."

Leguizamo, who has been very vocal about the lack of representation in Hollywood, includes them on the list of achievements: "They are from our culture and they are like us. I just wish it was easier to make it in America as a Latin artist."

However, he says he's seen an important change during the COVID-19 pandemic and with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement.

"The studios woke up," says Leguizamo, who is now in talks to direct a few projects, including one he's written. "I think everybody is making moves to change into being inclusive. I see it from small producers, directors in their offices, in their casting. I see it at Viacom. I see it at Univision. I see it at Netflix. I see it everywhere!" Audiences will too, starting this summer with releases like Everardo Gout's "The Forever Purge" with Ana de la Reguera (both Mexican); M. Night Shyamalan's "OLD," with Mexican actor Gael García Bernal and Steven Soderbergh's "No Sudden Move" with Benicio del Toro.

Spielberg's "West Side Story," set for December 10, includes a Latino cast this time around. Many "Puerto Ricans" in the original were white actors in brown makeup and, although widely successful, the 1961 movie was also criticized for portraying Latinos in a stereotypical way.

Beyond that, studios are working on a "The Father of the Bride" remake with music star Gloria Estefan alongside Andy Garcia (both Cuban-American.) "Encanto," the first Walt Disney Animation Studios movie co-directed by a Latino woman, Charise Castro Smith, about a young Colombian girl who's frustrated she's the only member of her family without magical powers, is also premiering this year. □

Subs give Italy 2-1 win over Austria, spot in Euro 2020 QFs

(AP) — With three exquisite touches of control, technique and finishing, Federico Chiesa ended 95 minutes of Italian frustration. This record-breaking team is off to the quarterfinals of the European Championship with a defense that finally allowed a goal after more than 19 hours but with a national team record 12th straight victory. After breezing through the group stage at Euro 2020, Italy was made to fight for its 2-1 victory over Austria on Saturday in a last-16 game that came to life in extra time.

It was Roberto Mancini's substitutes who made the difference with the goals from Chiesa and Matteo Pessina at Wembley Stadium. "We needed some fresh energy," Mancini said, "and the guys who came on were brilliant."

An unmarked Chiesa brought down Leonardo Spinazzola's high cross with his head, controlled the bouncing ball with his right boot and then used his other foot to shoot low into the net.

"Usually when the ball arrives like this you try a first time on the volley," Chiesa said. "But I think the goal came because I was composed, I was relaxed and I was focused."

The goal rolled the clock back 25 years to when European Championship games were last played in England and his father Enrico Chiesa scored for Italy. Euro '96, however, ended in the group stage for Italy. Now it's onto a quarterfinal meeting in Munich on Friday against the winner of Sunday's match between defending champion Portugal and top-ranked Belgium.

"Ideally we would like to avoid both," Mancini said, "but it's not possible."

After scoring seven goals without reply in the group stage, Italy didn't have it so easy against an Austrian team playing in the knockout stage at a European Championship for the first time.

"After 90 minutes we said that we just had to improve

the quality of the final passes," Spinazzola said, "and finally the goals arrived in extra time."

Individual skill produced the breakthrough from Chiesa. Italy's second was more about calmness in a goalmouth scramble. Pessina, who came on midway through the second half, sent the ball into the far corner of the net in the 105th minute.

"In this team everybody can score and this is our main strength," Pessina said. "We are a great group." The group spirit was clear in the raw emotion of the goal celebrations as teammates collapsed on Pessina, a late injury replacement in the squad. "He's not a player I have



necessarily unearthed—he has been doing brilliantly for Atalanta," Mancini said.

"He has certainly proved that he is a top player and I think he will have a great

future with Italy because I think he is only going to get better." □

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A photograph showing a blackjack table in the Orchid Casino. Several people are gathered around the table, which is covered with a purple cloth. The table has a green border with text like "INSURANCE", "BLACK JACK PAYS 3 TO 2", and "SPLIT 2 TO 1". There are many poker chips and cards on the table. The background shows the interior of the casino with other tables and chairs.



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Vandy unhappy how it made CWS finals but ready for Bulldogs

(AP) — Awkward is the only way to describe Vanderbilt's appearance in the all-SEC College World Series finals beginning Monday night against Mississippi State.

The Commodores were supposed to play North Carolina State in a winner-take-all bracket final Saturday and found out 12 hours before the the start the Wolfpack had been removed from the tournament because of COVID-19 protocols. The game was declared a no-contest.

"We certainly sympathize with their team, their fan base, too, understanding that we don't know the level of hurt that they are exposed to right now, but we certainly recognize it," Vandy coach Tim Corbin said Sunday.

"None of us wish to be in this particular position. We certainly would want to play them on the field or have played them on the field, but we didn't. So we are in the situation where we move forward."

Vanderbilt is the reigning national champion, hav-



ing won the CWS in 2019. There was no tournament last year because of the pandemic.

The No. 4 national seed Commodores (48-16) are at this point after winning two elimination games, most recently 3-1 Friday against an N.C. State team that had only 13 players available. "We're here for a reason," first baseman Dominic Keegan said. "We earned our spot here and we got

here because of our abilities and what we can do." The No. 7 Bulldogs (48-17) played two bracket finals against Texas, winning 4-3 on Saturday on Tanner Leggett's walk-off base hit. "Our guys have fought since the day we got here," MSU coach Chris Lemonis said. "We haven't had an easy game yet. It's been very tight, tough ballgames. But, man, they keep finding a way to per-

severe. It's been earned by our guys and I look forward to seeing them play on this stage."

Vanderbilt won two of the three regular-season meetings with MSU in Nashville in April. Vandy's Kumar Rocker, a possible top-10 pick in the Major League Baseball draft and the 2019 CWS Most Outstanding Player, pitched a three-hitter in the first game of that series and could be available if the fi-

nals go three games. Lemonis dismissed any suggestion that this year's championship would be tainted because Vanderbilt made the finals without completing bracket play, albeit through no fault of its own.

"The way that we came through it and the games that we've had to play — and now you're having to play Vanderbilt — there will be no asterisk for us," Lemonis said. "And I hate it for N.C. State. I have three coaches who worked for Elliot (Avent) on my staff. I have a long relationship with Elliot. My nieces and nephews all went to N.C. State. I have a lot of respect there. ...

"But for our guys, that stuff's out of our control. All we can do is show up and play, and whoever is in the other dugout we compete against."

Mississippi State will start Christian McLeod in Game 1. He's made one appearance in the CWS, lasting just 1 1/3 innings and giving up four runs in a 6-5 win over Virginia last Tuesday. □

Serena Williams says she will not play at the Tokyo Olympics



(AP) — Serena Williams said she will not go to the Tokyo Olympics, but did not want to say why during her pre-Wimbledon video conference with reporters

Sunday.

"I'm actually not on the Olympic list. ... Not that I'm aware of. If so, then I shouldn't be on it," Williams said.

The 39-year-old Williams has won four gold medals at past Summer Games for the United States: in both singles and doubles at the 2012 London Olympics — which held the tennis competition at the All England Club — and in doubles at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and 2008 Beijing Olympics. All of her doubles golds were won with her older sister, Venus, as her partner.

At the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, Serena Williams lost in the third round of singles to Elina Svitolina of Ukraine and the siblings

were beaten in the first round of doubles. Before that, they had been 15-0 as an Olympic doubles team.

"There's a lot of reasons that I made my Olympic decision," Williams said the day before the start of main-draw action at Wimbledon, where she will try to collect her 24th Grand Slam singles title. "I don't really want to — I don't feel like going into them today. Maybe another day. Sorry."

U.S. Tennis Association spokesman Chris Widmaier wrote in an email to The As-

sociated Press on Sunday: "Ultimately, the decision to participate in the Games is an individual one, and as we emerge from the pandemic, we recognize and respect the personal decisions made by our top athletes regarding participation in the Tokyo Games. Although we fully support the IOC and the (International Tennis Federation), and have encouraged our athletes to participate, we recognize the fact that in this unique time, some athletes may choose not to participate for personal reasons." □